



BEHIND THE BADGE

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ENGAGE



RECRUIT

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE U.S. AIR FORCE RECRUITING SERVICE

March / April 2022

Operation Blue Suit XLIII



Spring is approaching and with it is the halfway point in the fight to reach our goal for Fiscal 2022.

BEHIND THE BADGE

ABOUT US:

Behind the Badge is a digitally published, monthly magazine catering to the recruiting community. It is an official publication of the Air Force Recruiting Service Public Affairs Office.

SUBMIT:

Behind the Badge welcomes submissions from all recruiters and those working in the field. Photos, videos, story ideas, commentaries, suggestions and criticisms are all welcome, although publication is not guaranteed.

TO SUBMIT:

email: afrrshqpa@us.af.mil

DEADLINE:

Submission: 25 April

Publication: 6 May

ON THE COVER:



Air Force Recruiting Service's 18 best recruiters for Operation Blue Suit XLIII representing the Total Force and Space Force recruiting mission pose for a photo with spouses near Air Education and Training Command's headquarters at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph March 9, 2022, during Operation Blue Suit.

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the combined March and April edition of Behind the Badge. Spring is here and with it is the halfway point in the fight to reach our goal for fiscal 2022. We know you all have been busy with the lifting of many COVID restrictions but we hope you can take the time to see what recruiters around the command have been doing.

Air Force Recruiting Service celebrated 18 elite Total Force Airmen March 8, 2022, who are Operation Blue Suit winners. This tradition started in 1979 and honors recruiters for exceeding goals, demonstrating superior leadership qualities and making a huge impact on our mission. The Blue Suit winners' accomplishments are even more extraordinary considering the challenges we've faced with the aggregate effects of two years of COVID-19. We were happy to see many of you join us virtually and in person to celebrate these Airmen.

One part of our action plan focuses on things within our control like increasing recruiter presence in communities. A way to do that is by leveraging relationships with local news media in your markets.

A good example is that of Tech. Sgt. Katrina Smith, a relatively new recruiter with B Flight, 349th RCS, in St. Joseph, Missouri. Smith set the bar for local media engagements where she recruits. If you haven't seen her interview, here it is: https://www.kq2.com/news/struggle-to-get-new-recruits-into-military-in-st-joseph/article_fa25437a-9521-11ec-9712-b793970a55ee.Html.

Smith started by building a relationship with the local television news team last summer. That same station recently asked her to talk about the job market. So she consulted her squadron marketing NCO, who helped her with talking points and tips, and then she gave an interview that really tells the Air Force story.

You can do it too. Contact your flight and squadron leadership and AFRRS Public Affairs for tips and guidance on how to engage media—we are here to help you with your media and community outreach efforts.

HELPFUL HINTS ON HOW TO SAVE IMAGES:

We love showcasing Recruiters in Action ... keep them coming! I wanted to share a few helpful hints!

Things to remember when submitting your images to PA for consideration for the magazine:

When using your cell phones:

1. Use gridlines: they help balance your shot when taking pictures with your phone. Turning on gridlines will place lines on your screen based on the rule of thirds.
2. Get Closer, lose the filters, clean the lens and turn off the flash.
3. Trying taking pictures from weird angles. This can result in some of the most memorable photos. It's all about seeing things from a different perspective!
4. Turn your phone on its side. The web is a horizontal medium.

Visit: digitalbrandinginstitute.com/take-awesome-pictures-phone/ for more tips.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at: afrrshqpa@us.af.mil

Senior Enlisted Advisor to CJCS Visits AFRS

By Randy Martin, AFRS Public Affairs

The most senior enlisted service member, by position, in the U.S. armed forces returned to San Antonio, Feb. 9, 2022, for a talk with recruiters more than three decades after his own Oath of Enlistment first brought him to Texas.

“My journey started back in December of 1990, when I set foot on Lackland Air Force Base but I wouldn’t have been there if it wasn’t for the actions, the diligence and the professionalism of my recruiter,” said SEAC Ramón Colón-López, the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

In his current assignment, Colón-López serves as the principal military advisor to the Chairman on all matters involving joint and combined total force integration, utilization, health of the force, and joint development for enlisted personnel. He is the fourth person to hold the title and SEAC is not only his duty position but it is also his rank.

The meeting with Air Force Recruiting Service recruiters and leadership was meant to give the SEAC insight on how the Joint Force is approaching today’s challenges. For AFRS members, the visit was a welcomed opportunity to enlist the highest echelons of the Department of Defense in

their fiscal 2022 campaign to achieve their Air Force and Space Force goal.

“SEAC’s interest and our ability to immerse him in Air Force and Space Force recruiting given the limits of a pandemic along with other national recruiting challenges is an opportunity to showcase our Airmen,” said Chief Master Sgt. Antonio Goldstrom, command chief, AFRS at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph.

In January, AFRS commander, Maj. Gen. Ed Thomas outlined challenges facing AFRS in a memo to the unit.

“Not two years into a pandemic, and we have warning lights flashing ... most notably our Qualified and Waiting list is about half of what it has been historically, lead conversions are down, propensity has dipped, unemployment is down, our public engagement and time in schools is at an all-time low, and we’ve had two years of limited recruiter training opportunities,” Thomas said.

When he took his seat in a conference room at the AFRS headquarters, Colón-López, a career Pararescueman,



was prepared to talk about the mental and physical toughness which is required of all members of the DOD.

“I’ve been encouraging a lot of people to go ahead and memorize their oath,” Colón-López said to AFRS’s deputy commander, the command chief and senior staff leaders of AFRS’s operations and marketing directorates. “It’s a matter of priorities. We need to focus on what we are here to do and realize that there is a lot of sacrifice that goes with it.”

He outlined the top joint force recruiting priorities for the CJCS and the Secretary of Defense. They include the physical fitness of potential service members, recruitment marketing to counter possible negative sentiments of influencers toward military service, and the preservation of Americans’ support for their armed forces.

Colón-López recalled the impact his recruiter had when they met in the SEAC’s hometown, Bridgeport, Connecticut.

“My message to you is pretty simple,” Colón-López said. “If you’re going to be out there on the front lines getting America’s best and brightest, make sure that you make that difference. Not only that they remember your name long after serving but they remember the impact you make on their life because that is really the true core of who you are.”

The SEAC left AFRS’s headquarters accompanied by AFRS’s senior enlisted leader, armed with information for the remainder of his visit and the subsequent return to the Pentagon.

“Our headquarters staff, including operations and marketing directorates, provided a relevant and data-supported presentation which left the SEAC in a better position to advise the Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on AFRS’s operations and our people,” Goldstrom said.

Goldstrom designed a two-hour tour covering as much of the recruiting enterprise as possible. Their first stop included a meeting with enlisted accessions recruiters from the 341st Recruiting Squadron in the Live Oak, Texas, at their recruiting station.

There, Colón-López encouraged recruiters to set high goals for themselves. He described his own motives for enlisting and compared that drive to the current Generation Z’s values and interests.

“What they are looking for now is education, stability, providing for their family, a trade that they can use to continue to make a living,” Colón-López said. “But they also need to understand the sacrifice that they will have to make.”

Colón-López presented each recruiter a Challenge Coin as a memento of the visit. According to the SEAC, it is modeled on a World War II-era dog tag so that recipients



Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Ramón Colón-López (Right) shakes hands with an enlisted accessions recruiter at the Live Oak, Texas, Air Force recruiting station Feb. 9, 2022. His visit with Air Force Recruiting Service recruiters and leadership was meant to give the SEAC insight on how the Joint Force is approaching today’s challenges. For AFRS members, the visit was a welcomed opportunity to enlist the highest echelons of the Department of Defense in their fiscal 2022 campaign to achieve their Air Force and Space Force goals.

The Oath of Enlistment (for enlisted):

“I, _____, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God.”

are reminded of sacrifices made by generations of service members. Its front features the SEAC's positional colors and signature to represent his commitment to every person under his responsibility. The back has an imprint of the U.S. Constitution and service emblems of the Joint Force among other meaningful elements.

The final stop for SEAC's immersive tour featured the 330th RCS, AFRS's Special Warfare recruiting unit at its headquarters in San Antonio. Some 330th RCS recruiters were able to join the meeting from as far away as Hawaii, virtually. Discussion and questions for the seasoned special warfare PJ led to candid comments on myriad topics before a comprehensive farewell.



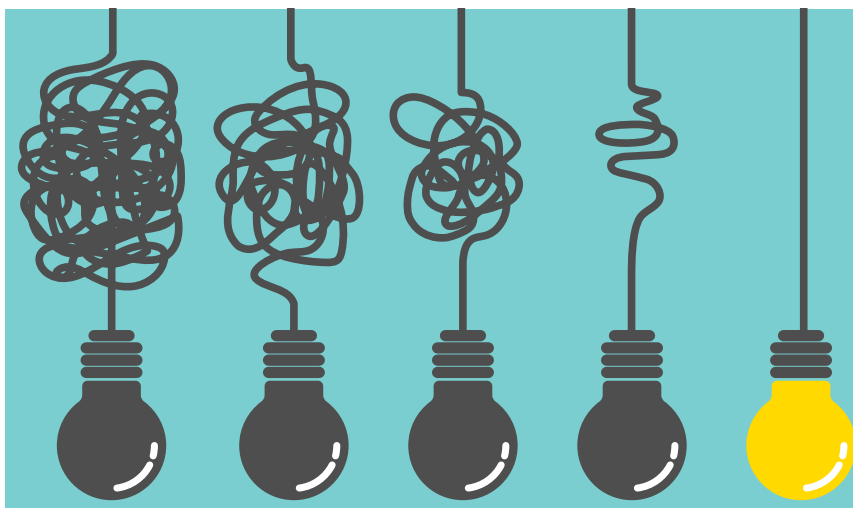
Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Ramón Colón-López (Center Left) listens to an enlisted accessions recruiter talk about Air National Guard recruiting in the Live Oak, Texas Air Force recruiting station Feb. 9, 2022. His visit with Air Force Recruiting Service recruiters and leadership was meant to give the SEAC insight on how the Joint Force is approaching today's challenges. For AFRS members, the visit was a welcomed opportunity to enlist the highest echelons of the Department of Defense in their fiscal year 2022, campaign to achieve their Air Force and Space Force goal.

"I would like to personally thank you for making sure that you continue to build the bench in order to fight tomorrow's wars. We need to make sure that we continue to produce sons and daughters that are able to go ahead and fight tomorrow's wars and you are

at the forefront of that," Colón-López said.

"I appreciate being your teammate."

For more information about the SEAC visit: <https://www.jcs.mil/Leadership/Article-View/Article/2039792/seac-ramon-cz-colon-lopez/>



QUESTIONS OR CONTINUOUS PROCESS IMPROVEMENT?

Contact AFRS's Chief of Strategic
Planning & CPI Program Manager:
Matthew J. Jackson
Comm: (210) 565-4681

332nd Recruiting Squadron organizes event to help disaster victims in Kentucky

By Air Force Recruiting Service Public Affairs

After a Dec. 10, 2021, tornado caused death and destruction in multiple states, members of Air Force Recruiting Service's 332nd Recruiting Squadron responded quickly and took action to help their community.

Within 72 hours of the disaster, AFRS Airmen and other volunteers began organizing a no-cost event to help residents of Dawson Springs, Kentucky.

"Originally the idea was to reach people in shelters and provide some positivity through simple involvement like throwing a football and taking time to spend with the families affected," said 2nd Lt. Brennan Burke, a Gold Bar Recruiter and native of Kentucky who is assigned to the 333rd RCS at Patrick Space Force Base, Florida. With support from her command in Florida, Burke headed to her home state to help fellow Kentuckians and the 332nd RCS.

"Good-hearted people from all over mobilized to make the relief effort bigger than anyone anticipated," Burke said.

With homes and infrastructure destroyed, communities left unrecognizable and more than 50 people, including children, dead, the 332nd RCS's initiative started to achieve its goal.

"The physical devastation is only part of the damage caused," said 2nd Lt. Jacob Hoppe,

a Gold Bar Recruiter with the 332nd RCS in Nashville. "Dawson Springs is a community of no more than 2,500 people and it was one of the communities that was hit the hardest. Over 200 families were displaced and living in government-furnished cabins."

Word spread and with the backing of volunteers, the 332nd RCS was able to plan the "Dawson Springs Down Day" Jan. 13, 2022, at the West Kentucky 4-H Camp.

Recruiters outside of Dawson Springs reached out to find people in the community who were

"In all this destruction and loss, comes this incredible warmth of a community that has nothing but love to give."

2nd Lt. Brennan Burke

willing to donate their time to operate games, competitions, the flight simulator and a face painting station.

Several television and radio stations advertised the event and people outside of Dawson Springs traveled long distances to help. Burke said that organizers also advertised the event on commercial and regional social media sites.

Two musicians in Frankfort, Kentucky, drove three hours to sing at the Dawson Springs Down Day. One man travelled for six hours on the evening before the event so he could serve more than 300 meals at no cost. A church provided more than 150 homemade meals of jambalaya. One woman brought phones from a government agency for people who qualified for assistance.

"The Dawson Springs Down Day was open to all members of the community, at no cost, and

it was provided by some of the most amazing people in order to give Dawson Springs a feeling of hope, said Tech. Sgt. Keith Creyer a recruiter with the 332nd RCS in Hopkinsville, Kentucky.

“In all this destruction and loss, comes this incredible warmth of a community that has nothing but love to give,” Burke said. “Children were able to be children again, and parents were smiling for the first time since the tornado.

Recruiters felt like aiding in recovery efforts

was a way of giving back to the communities they live and serve in.

“As a recruiting service we are in these communities asking families to give us their sons and daughters to carry out the Air Force mission,” Burke said. “Now it’s our responsibility as a service to help these communities in times of need and show them that we are fully integrated with them, and are there to support them as we would support our own families.”



Children gather around 2nd Lt. Brennan Burke, a 333rd Recruiting Squadron Gold Bar Recruiter, and 2nd Lt. Jacob Hoppe, a 332nd RCS GBR at West Kentucky 4-H camp Jan. 13, 2022. The 332nd RCS organized the “Dawson Springs Down Day” and partnered with numerous organizations to help the Dawson Springs community after a tornado devastated the community. RICky the Recruiter, an inflatable Airman, was on hand to entertain children who played games at the camp.



Lt. Col. Bryan Ewing, 332nd Recruiting Squadron commander, presents a certificate of appreciation to Kammie King, a volunteer/leader for the Pennyryle State Park shelter at West Kentucky 4-H Camp on Jan. 13, 2022. The 332nd RCS organized the “Dawson Springs Down Day” and partnered with numerous organizations to help Dawson Springs area residents after a tornado caused damage to the community. RICky the Recruiter, an inflatable Airman, was on hand to entertain children who played games at the camp.

Fans display promotional items during a Jan. 28, 2022, Hartford Wolf Pack hockey game against the Providence Bruins inside the XL Center at Hartford, Connecticut.



AFRS Marksman, Advertiser Hits Targets in Phoenix

By Randy Martin, AFRS Public Affairs

An Airman and advertiser for U.S. Space Force, assigned to Air Force Recruiting Service here hit his target during the 2022 Southwest Nationals near Phoenix, Feb. 15, 2022. He actually did it multiple times, from a thousand yards, with a rifle in competition against hundreds of other marksmen.

"It was a challenging event," said Staff Sgt. Cameron Keating, advertising noncommissioned officer for Space Force in AFRS's marketing directorate. He has been a member of the Air Force Rifle Team, part of the Air Force's World Class Athlete Program, for 10 years.

Keating was determined to make the most out of the competition in Arizona.

"When Staff Sgt. Keating puts his mind to a task you can rest assured that it will be accomplished with excellence," said Capt. Timothy Applegate, chief of Space Force marketing branch for AFRS.

Keating said he got lucky when he managed to register for the competition which was limited to 360 shooters. Exclusivity didn't stop there. Competitive categories included small-bore, service rifle, Palma Rifle, Any/Iron, and Any/Any with targets set at 600 and 1,000 yards.

"These events have restrictions on sights and ammunition depending on the category entered," Keating said. "In competitive shooting there are many different weapons we can shoot depending on the event rules and what division we want to enter."

Keating's weapon was a .308-caliber Palma Rifle which is fired from a prone position without the use of a scope and only steadied by the shooter's two hands and shoulder.

"Think of it like golf clubs and each rifle has an event it is specific for but you can use the same rifle in multiple events," Keating said.





As for how he fared in the competition, there was some good news.

"I did manage to win the final stage at 1,000 yards in the Any/Any category," said Keating. High winds in the desert affected the ultimate outcome and Keating lost by a narrow margin during a tie breaker.

"Given his day-to-day activities in the office, there's no question why he performed so well during this competition," Applegate said.

Regardless of the score, Keating found a way to make the competition, 1,000 miles from his AFRS office, helpful for the recruiting mission.

"I took the local recruiting team out to see the event and assisted them by making connections with the venue," Keating said.

For more information about Space Force visit: www.spaceforce.com and to learn more about the Air Force World Class Athlete Program visit: <https://myairforcelife.com/sports-world-class-athletes/>

Air Force Recruiting Service's Space Force advertising noncommissioned officer, Staff Sgt. Cameron Keating (left), from Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, Texas, poses for a photo Feb. 13, 2022, at a shooting range near Phoenix with Staff Sgt. Drew Phillips, Staff Sgt. Gabriel Vallejo and Staff Sgt. Lindsey Harvey from the 362nd Recruiting Squadron and Airman Maci Taylor Dungan a recruiter assistant. Keating participated in the 2022 Southwest Nationals marksmanship championship. He has been a member of the Air Force Rifle Team, which is part of the Air Force's World Class Athlete program, for 10 years. He used the opportunity to connect the local recruiters to people at the venue.

Saturday processing days added by USMEPCOM to support recruiting partners

Published Feb. 11, 2022 / By Susan VanBoening / U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command

To further support military recruiting partners meeting current goals, select Military Entrance Processing Stations will open for processing one Saturday per month, from January through March and in May. On Jan. 22, 2022 the command began the first of four Saturday openings at ten MEPS.

“Saturday processing provides additional flexibility during challenging times,” said Col. Megan Stallings, U.S. MEP Command’s commander. “The Jan. 22, 2022, opening made a difference for individual applicants and the services.”

The decision to add processing days was not taken lightly by USMEPCOM leadership and resulted from an intensive analysis of recruiting service processing needs.

Future processing dates set for Saturdays in 2022 are Feb. 26, Mar. 26, and May 21. For each Saturday processing, there are a total of 10 MEPS open on each of the Saturdays. Identification of the 10 MEPS is coordinated monthly with the services and the approximate date for a given month will be finalized 35-40 days prior to the following month’s Saturday processing.

To open for Saturday processing, unlike previous Saturday openings, there will not be

a minimum projection requirement. Saturday processing follows the 48-hour scheduling rules requiring submission of applicant projections no later than 11 a.m. on the preceding Thursday.

MEPS will also provide night testing on Fridays before the scheduled opening. At the discretion of the MEPS commander, special purpose testing can take place on Saturdays also. At least one walk-in per service is permitted with the expectation that the workload will not exceed medical processing capacity.

Stallings recognizes the additional strain weekend openings can cause. Supporting recruiters in fulfilling their mission while

ensuring Saturday processing is used efficiently and not overburdening personnel is a priority to USMEPCOM leadership. To minimize civilian employee stress, the intent is not to have any one MEPS open for more than two of the four Saturdays.

“These additional operational capabilities allow our recruiting partners to maximize access to the testing, medical,

and processing at the MEPS to achieve increased contracting and accession goals,” Stallings said. “We know our MEPS personnel work day in, day out in support of ‘Freedom’s Front Door,’ and our goal is to provide additional Saturday processing days efficiently and effectively.”



Applicants collect their paperwork after confirming their identifications and taking pictures at the central command desk while in-processing at the Military Entrance Processing Station on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., Oct. 7, 2014.

April 20, 2022



RISE ABOVE AVIATION MENTORSHIP

Previously known as: The Pathway to Wings Virtual Career Brief event series



For more information visit: <https://www.airforce.com/rise-above>



How AFRS's 43rd Annual Operation Blue Suit Celebration Was Extraordinary

By Randy Martin, AFRS Public Affairs

Air Force Recruiting Service continued its 43-year tradition of honoring excellence during the Operation Blue Suit celebration March 7-10, 2022, in San Antonio.

For 18 of its best recruiters, most accompanied by their spouses, the three days of training, team building and services was aimed at showcasing AFRS's best Airmen.

"This sends a powerful message to the rest of the recruiting force," said Maj. Gen. Ed Thomas, AFRS commander, during his welcoming remarks at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph. "We value skill and execution and dedication. We don't just value the service member, we value that family and the special loved ones that come along and support us."

OBS formally began with an arrival ceremony inside JB-SA-Randolph's iconic headquarters building nicknamed the "Taj Mahal." The 323rd Army Band

"Fort Sam's Own" played music as winners walked on red carpet under the Randolph High School Air Force Jr. ROTC honor guard's arched swords emerging with an introduction to in-person and virtual attendees.

For some winners the

a recruiting and retention noncommissioned officer in the 140th Wing, Colorado Air National Guard at Aurora. "I thought to myself they are pretty awesome not really understanding what it took to become a Blue Suit recruiter."

Absher was anxious to

join in OBS activities that included an opportunity to hear from the Air Education and Training Command's senior leaders, special staff representatives and Blue Suit alumni during informal and formal settings befitting a significant career milestone for AFRS members.

"I hope to gain more friendships and build camaraderie with other rock stars!" Absher said.

"Understanding we cannot do this alone, we all work together and share ideas."

Among those "rock stars" was an officer recruiter based in Chicago whose Blue Suit win and 500-word essay earned a Columbia Southern



Tech Sgt. Rebecca Absher (left) a recruiting and retention noncommissioned officer from the 140th Wing, Colorado Air National Guard, shakes hands with Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, commander of Air Education and Training Command March 9, 2022, outside of the AETC headquarters at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, Texas.

moment was the realization of a goal imagined early in their respective careers.

"I remember walking down the 'Blue Suit' hall during recruiting school (at JB-SA-Lackland)," said Tech. Sgt. Rebecca Absher,

University, scholarship covering tuition for up to 60 hours or 36 consecutive months in one degree program.

To receive the award, Master Sgt. Alexander James, 350th Recruiting Squadron and Air Force Reserve member, was joined by his wife, Amanda James, and representatives of the college on a stage inside the Gruene Events Center at New Braunfels, Texas, March 10, 2022, during OBS's capstone event, a formal banquet dinner.

"Operation Blue Suit was an amazing opportunity for my wife and me," James said. "Major General Thomas and his staff did an amazing job of making us feel much appreciated. The development and mentoring during the week was unmatched!"

James and other OBS award recipients were selected by their units' leaders based on accomplishment of assigned goals. Those units span the

Sanchez, James' supervisor and the officer accessions flight chief for the 350th RCS at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey. "He's already made his goal for this year but he's not comfortable with that. He always strives for more."

Sanchez speculated that James could contend for another Blue Suit trophy in fiscal 2022. If that happens it will not be the first time.

Tech. Sgt. Dustin Kincaid, an enlisted accessions recruiter from the 336th Recruiting Squadron in Columbus, Georgia, became the first back-

to-back winner of OBS since its inauguration in 1979. He was awarded for his service in fiscal 2020 and fiscal 2021.

For Kincaid, originally from Asbury, West Virginia, the formula for success includes trust and respect.

"Really it comes down to being willing to believe in the kids when no one else is and being willing to treat everyone that you recruit like you would want to



Retired Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Robert Gaylor (second from left), presents AFRS's fiscal 2021, Major General A.J. Stewart Top Recruiter award to Tech. Sgt. Dustin Kincaid (center), with Gaylor and Kincaid are AFRS commander Maj. Gen. Ed Thomas (left), Kincaid's spouse, Malinda, and AFRS command chief master sergeant, Chief Master Sgt. Antonio Goldstrom (right).

be treated," Kincaid said. "Hard work really does go a long way and taking on those difficult tasks of making sure everyone who walked through that door or called the phone knew I was willing and ready to help them in any way possible."

It was an accomplishment made even more remarkable considering the overlapping global pandemic that has hampered recruiters' access to potential applicants. Those limits drove Kincaid to become innovative and agile.

"One of the many challenges that were overcome was building trust in the community and giving them the understanding that in uncertain times, as with COVID-19 and operations in Afghanistan at the time, we are the good guys and being able to pivot and adjust during a COVID-19 environment led to great success," Kincaid said. "No one would succeed



Malinda Kincaid, an Air Force recruiter's spouse, rings a bell inside Fleenor Auditorium located in Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph's iconic headquarters nicknamed the Taj Mahal on March 8, 2022.

world and OBS is highly competitive.

"We're all very proud of Master Sergeant James," said Senior Master Sgt. Jackie

in the COVID-19 world if they were not up for change. Understanding that flexibly and learning new virtual processes and key ways to keep moving forward allowed us to succeed in our recruiting mission.”

For Kincaid there was one final highlight for OBS and its formal banquet. Retired Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Robert Gaylor, the banquet’s keynote speaker and the fifth person to hold the CMSAF rank, presented Kincaid the Major General A.J. Stewart Top Recruiter award for fiscal 2021.

The award is named in honor of Maj. Gen. A.J. Stewart, AFRS’s commander from 2008-2010. Stewart was a renowned advocate for all Airmen. He died in 2014 after battling cancer. “I am so incredibly proud of my husband and his accomplishments in receiving Blue Suit two years in a row,” said Malinda Kincaid, Tech. Sgt. Kincaid’s spouse. She joined him for the presentation. “He gave his heart and soul to meet the task at hand and it truly paid off to change kids’ lives and join alongside us in the Air Force!”



Operation Blue Suit XLIII Banquet

Gruene Event Center, Gruene Texas



Blue Suit winner receives scholarship

By Randy Martin, AFRS Public Affairs

A Total Force recruiter and Airman received a Columbia Southern University scholarship during the annual celebration of Air Force Recruiting Service's best recruiters. It was the capstone of a week that honored recruiters and their loved ones from throughout Air Force Recruiting Service.

Master Sgt. Alexander James, 350th Recruiting Squadron and Air Force Reserve member, competed for the scholarship by submitting a 500-word essay concerning his goals and personal development. The CSU full scholarship covers one degree program and can be applied directly to James' tuition for up to 60 hours or 36 consecutive months

in the degree program. CSU allows its scholarship to be transferred to James' spouse.

James was joined by his wife Amanda and representatives of the college on stage in front of more than 100 people including honorees and invited guests inside the Gruene Events Center at New Braunfels, Texas, March 10, 2022.

The scholarship was presented by the college in recognition of the invaluable work of Air Force and Space Force recruiters as well as their families during the 43rd annual Operation Blue Suit celebration March 7-10, 2022.

James was one of 18 recruiters who competed and

at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey. "He embodies the Air Force core values. His applicants all know that they can go to him even after they're in their units with any questions or concerns. His strongest character trait is that he puts service before self but he's also very focused on

family. He's already made his goal for this year, but he's not comfortable with that. He always strives for more."

The CSU full scholarship covers one degree program and can be applied directly to James' tuition for up to 60 hours or 36 consecutive months in the degree program. CSU allows its scholarship to be transferred to James' spouse.

Sanchez said that James will be a strong competitor for Operation Blue Suit in 2022. "He won't mind

the trip back to Texas."

"Operation Blue Suit was an amazing opportunity for my wife and I," James said. "Major General Thomas and his staff did an amazing job of making us feel very appreciated. The development and mentoring during the week was unmatched!"

The 350th RCS is part of the 367th Recruiting Group.

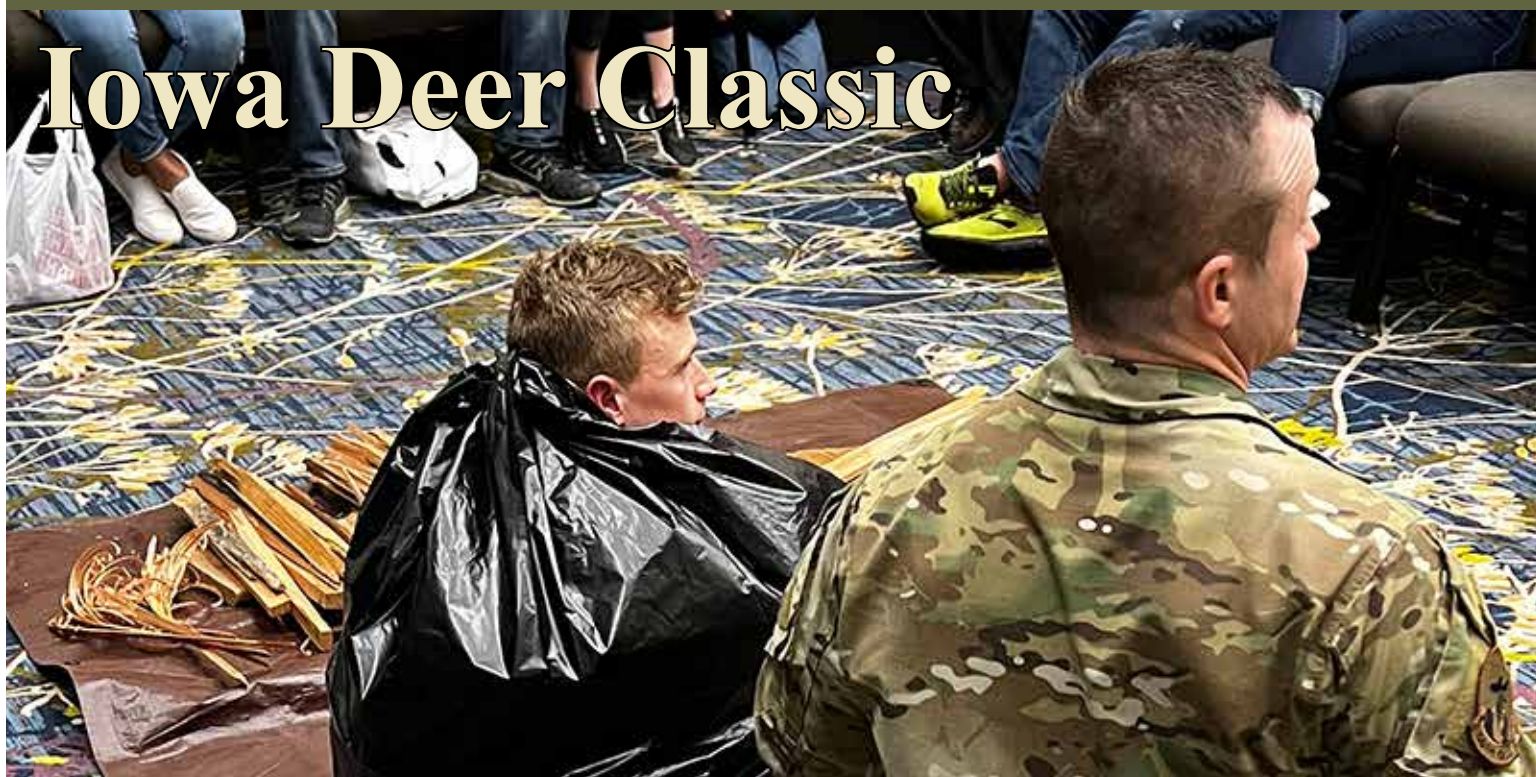


Master Sgt. Alexander James (right), a recruiter with the 350th Recruiting Squadron, and his wife Amanda received a Columbia Southern University scholarship with tuition for up to 60 hours or 36 consecutive months in a degree program. CSU also allows its scholarship to be transferred to James' spouse Amanda.

were selected as Fiscal 2021's Operation Blue Suit winners. The Blue Suit winners were chosen by their units based on accomplishments in support of the Total Force recruitment mission.

"We're all very proud of Master Sgt. James," said Senior Master Sgt. Jackie Sanchez, Officer Accessions flight chief for the 350th RCS

Iowa Deer Classic



Master Sgt. Clifton Cleveland (top right) and Staff Sgt. Ryan O'Rourke (top left), 55th Operational Support Squadron, Offutt Air Force Base, demonstrate survival techniques to on-lookers at the Iowa Deer Classic March 5, 2022, inside the Iowa Events Center in Des Moines. Cleveland also demonstrated a wood cutting (bottom left) and fire starting (bottom right) technique. The 330th Recruiting Squadron participated in the Iowa Deer Classic. The three-day event featured recruiters from the local flight manning a booth with survival demonstrations put on by SERE specialists supporting the event. The 330th Recruiting Squadron is always trying to find unique ways to find individuals that fit the bill for careers in Special Warfare, Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape or Explosive Ordnance Disposal.





Tech. Sgt. Rob Ferdinand (left) and Tech. Sgt. Philip Casali, recruiters with the 342nd Recruiting Squadron, pose for a photo March 9, 2022, at Southeastern Louisiana University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. They conducted a presentation for 25 nursing students to spread awareness about the Air Force Nurse Transition Program and the Nurse Corps Fully Qualified/Health Professions Scholarship Program.



Staff Sgt. James Stevenson (right), a recruiter from D Flight, 369th Recruiting Squadron, talks to high school students in Los Angeles County on Feb. 23, 2022, about the benefits of service to the country and how serving in the Air Force can help the students accomplish their goals. Los Angeles County has reduced its COVID-19 restrictions for in-person events thereby allowing 369th RCS recruiters to inspire and engage the next generation of Airman in person.



Tech. Sgt. Ivan Frye (left), a recruiter from D Flight, 369th Recruiting Squadron, and Master Sgt. Dustin Parsons, a recruiter from the 261st Cyber Operations Squadron, California Air National Guard, talk to students during lunch at Da Vinci High School in El Segundo, California, Feb. 15, 2022. They autographed posters and included their contact information so students know how to contact a recruiter should they want guidance for a bright future.

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. CQ Brown, Jr. administers Oath of Enlistment

Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen. CQ Brown, Jr., administered the Oath of Enlistment March 16, 2022, at Dayton University Arena, Dayton, Ohio, to a group of 24 future Airmen during the halftime of an NCAA men's basketball tournament game between Wright State and Bryant University. While there Gen. Brown met several members of the 338th Recruiting Squadron including Senior Master Sgt. Stephanie Franco, 338th RCS's production superintendent (right). He congratulated each recruit before the ceremony (bottom left). Recruiters from the 338th Recruiting Squadron posed for a group photo at the game (bottom right).



Air Force Team Blitzes Houston to Win Diverse Future Airmen For Rated Careers

By Capt. Victoria Carman, AFRS Detachment 1

Air Force Recruiting Service Detachment 1 hit the streets of Houston, Feb. 22-25, 2022, to inspire young people in multiple school districts, colleges, clubs and volunteer organizations.

Det. 1's primary mission is to inform, influence and inspire the next generation of rated aviators.

"The initial vision for the Houston Blitz was for our new members to integrate with local recruiters and schools in the area," said Maj. Kelly McNerney, Det. 1 director of operations. "Our team was bolstered by the support of the local recruiters and our own Aviation Inspiration Mentors (AIM) who volunteered to participate, making this week a phenomenal success in connecting with underrepresented groups."

The AIM program allows Det. 1 to connect young people with Air Force mentors from rated career fields that they could pursue. For this event, Capt. Wesley Cobb, a C-40 B/C pilot from the 1st Airlift Squadron at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, was selected to participate with a Det. 1 team and tell his own story to students who might not have considered an aviation career.

"It's important to continue this method of outreach," Cobb



Capt. Wesley Cobb (left), a C-40 B/C pilot from the 1st Airlift Squadron at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, helps a student try on a flight helmet at one of several schools he visited in Houston as a volunteer with Air Force Recruiting Service Detachment 1.

said. "In a city like Houston there are so many talented and hardworking individuals who don't know all of the opportunities that are out there."

Cobb graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado, in 2014, and initially was assigned as a C-17 Globemaster III pilot. He currently transports senior civilian and military leaders of the military to destinations throughout the world.

"I was one of those students who wasn't aware of all these opportunities," Cobb

said. "If it hadn't been for my parents and a few instrumental mentors I would have never been able to accept a football scholarship and apply for the Air Force Academy."

On the first day of the Blitz, the team hit the ground running, visiting three Houston area schools and meeting the local recruiters who would be paving the way to a successful rest of the week.

"We knew when we developed this vision, that we would need the expertise of the recruiters local to this area, who know how to best connect with the community," said Master Sgt. Cherelle Terry, a Det. 1 member and event lead for the Houston Blitz. "This has been a really rewarding experience to talk with these future Airmen about opportunities, careers and the future of their education, things that they maybe hadn't thought about yet."

For Terry, her new position at Det. 1 was an adjustment from her usual "field recruiter" role. Her time spent recruiting opened the doors to a successful Blitz engaging almost 2,200 students over the course of the week.

"We're liaisons for those young future aviators to connect with AIM mentors and get started on their pathway to wings. After spending so much time in a traditional recruiter



Brig. Gen. Matthew Barker (right), Texas Air National Guard chief of staff, speaks with students at the University of Houston about opportunities within the Air Force, Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard, Feb. 23, 2022.

position, I had to transition from recruiting students to informing, influencing and inspiring these young aspiring aviators,” Terry said.

To cover the most amount of area as possible, Det. 1 divided into teams designated for specific audiences with tailored information and opportunities for those students. This also allowed the leadership team to fully immerse themselves into the campuses where Det. 1 was hosting their General Officer Inspire presentations. GO Inspire is an Air Force-wide program that encourages general officers to engage schools and provide a real life example for young people.

“The goal of GO Inspire intentionally aims to engage

with minority serving institution which allows us to also connect with underrepresented groups,” Terry said. “Each time we connect with one of the 774 minority serving institutions, we’re also informing, influencing and inspiring students to rise above the unknown and join an aviation career field.”

The second day of the Blitz was packed with seven speaking engagements. Events were in-person or virtual for the teams. There was a GO Inspire event featuring Brig. Gen. Matthew Barker, the Chief of Staff of the Air National Guard at the University of Houston, a minority serving institution, for members of an organization known as L.E.G.A.C.I. which stands

for leadership, excellence, grades, access, collaboration and identity.

“With the lack of military exposure in a lot of non-military cities, people think you join the service as a last resort, which isn’t true. It can be a good ‘plan A’ as well,” Cobb said.

After a short break for dinner, the team moved right into their virtual event for the night, the first presentation for Det. 1 of their newly rebranded, Rise Above Aviation Mentorship webinar.

“Previously this virtual webinar was titled Pathway to Wings, however we decided it was time to capitalize on the best part of the presentations,” said Maj. Matthew Roland, Det. 1 Director of Inspire Operations, “The mentorship after the presentation has always been the most robust discussion.”

Roland said that RAAM lets attendees of all ages ask questions ranging from how to apply to the Air Force Academy to how current enlisted members can commission to become an aviator.

RAAM presentations allow youth from all across the U.S. to join in, listen and discuss the potential options the Air Force can offer to people of all backgrounds, races, ethnicities and genders. Virtual presentations were created due to the limitations in travel during the COVID-19 pandemic, but the team

“ I was one of those students who wasn’t aware of all these opportunities.

Capt. Wesley Cobb



Capt. Wesley Cobb (right), a C-40 B/C pilot from the 1st Airlift Squadron at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, talks to students at one of several schools he visited in Houston as a volunteer with Air Force Recruiting Service Detachment 1.

continues to see many interested youth, young adults, and influencers sign up for every presentation.

“As the global environment continues to change, connecting with youth becomes more and more important,” said Lt. Col. Jay Park, Det. 1 commander. “The diversity of thought, backgrounds and beliefs is critical to the Air Force’s mission success in the most interconnected and technologically advanced environment we’ve ever experienced. Therefore, it’s vital for us to improve diversity in order to make us a stronger and more lethal force.”

Det. 1 and its volunteers are seeing success.

“Whether it’s high fives at a high school or proof reading a U.S. Air Force ROTC scholarship application, Det. 1 continues to make great strides in mentoring youth in the endless possibilities they could find within the Air Force,” Park said.

For more information visit:
www.airforce.com/rise-above

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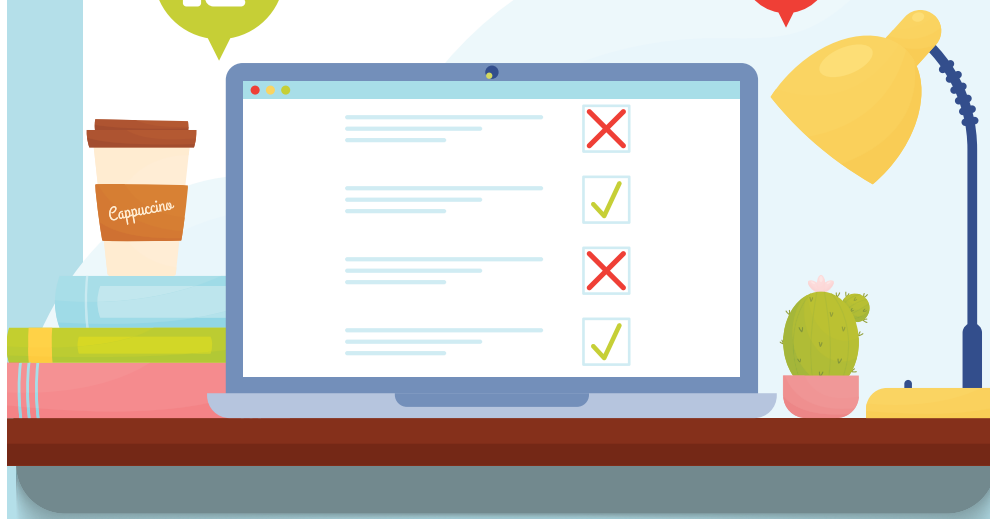
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RECRUITER QUALITY OF LIFE ONLINE SURVEY

Don't forget to complete your Recruiter Quality of Life Survey. Recruiters should have received an email and letter correspondence regarding the RQL. Recruiters can access the survey now by going to the link they were sent from Fors Marsh Group. Just enter your PIN and complete the survey. A hard copy of the survey will be mailed during the week of May 9th if recruiters would prefer to complete the survey via paper and pencil. The survey provides insights into various topics including: work demands, barriers limiting recruiter success, resources provided by the Service that help facilitate productivity, leadership engagement, satisfaction with recruiting, and insights into recruiter health and well-being.

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Air Force GO Inspire program brings leader full circle

By Tech. Sgt. Jessica Kind, 343rd Recruiting Squadron

An Air Force senior leader recently circled back to the community where he launched a three-decades long career. It

was part of a program that is designed to increase diversity in Air Force and Space Force ranks while attracting the next generation of Airmen and Guardians.

Lt. Gen. Scott Pleus, 7th Air Force commander, visited several schools in the Twin Ports area, covering Minnesota and Wisconsin, as part of the GO Inspire program March 7-9, 2022.

"I really appreciated the opportunity to visit with the students at these schools who all came from diverse backgrounds," Pleus said. "We had some great questions and engagement within the groups."

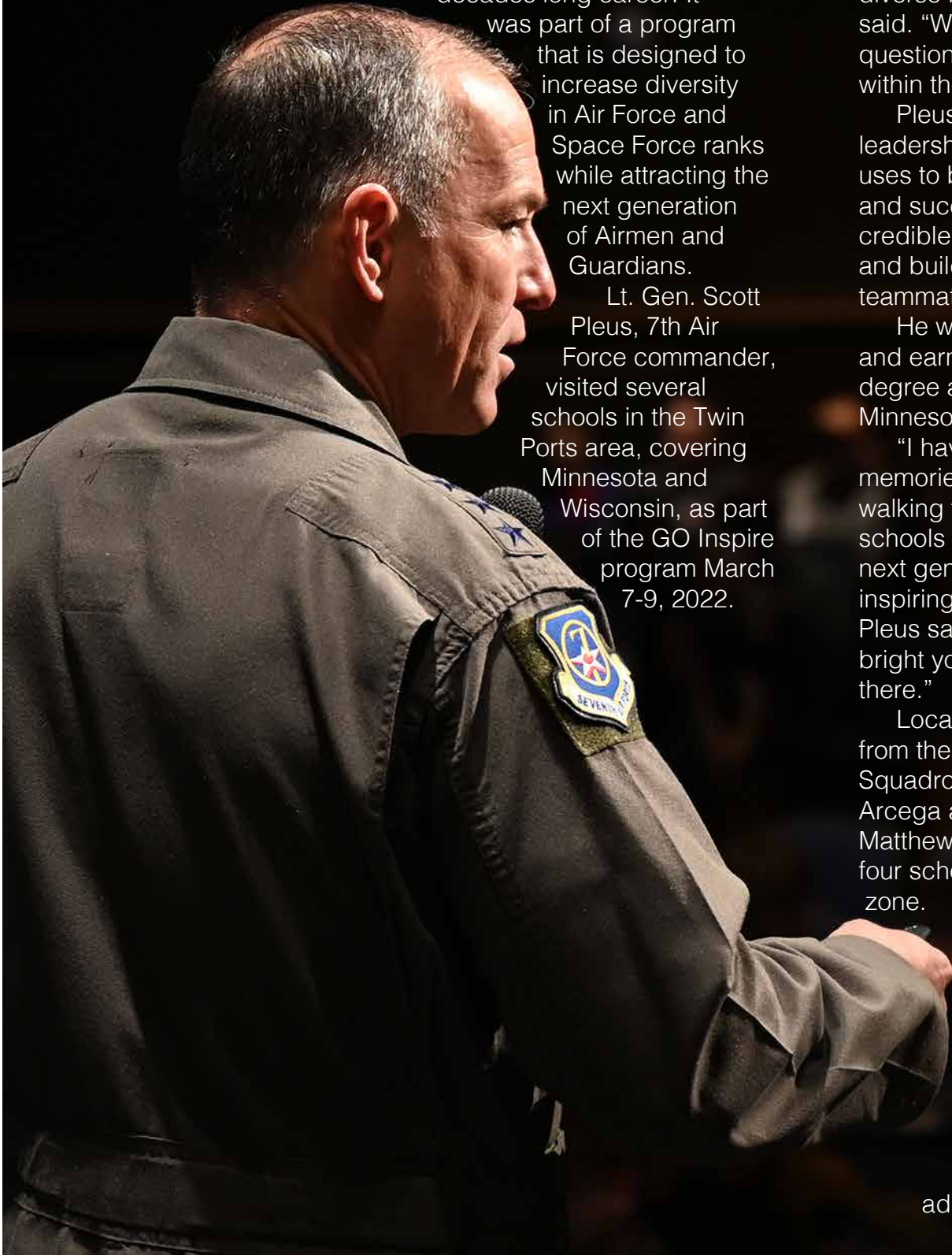
Pleus discussed leadership and what he uses to build a strong and successful team. "Be credible, use common sense and build trust with your teammates," Pleus said.

He was raised in the area and earned his Bachelor's degree at the University of Minnesota, Duluth.

"I have a lot of great memories in this area and walking the halls of these schools and talking with our next generation was very inspiring for me personally," Pleus said. "We have some bright young minds out there."

Local Air Force recruiters from the 343rd Recruiting Squadron, Tech. Sgt. Jay Arcega and Tech. Sgt. Matthew Goebel, coordinated four school visits within their zone.

"We really valued his visit and the chance for him to share his unique military experiences with potential future generations of Airmen," Goebel said. "It was an added bonus that he





Second Lieutenant Nakai Lake, (left) an operations research analyst with the Air Force Personnel Center, and Staff Sgt. Anastasia Rodriguez (right), an aerospace propulsion craftsman, 6th Maintenance Squadron, pose for a photo at the Fond Du Lac Tribal and Community College in Cloquet, Minnesota, March 9,

was a native of the Duluth and Superior area because that helped the students connect with him on a more personal level.”

Pleus’s love of aviation first sparked his interest in the Air Force but he said the people he has met in the Air Force have inspired him to stay and move up through the ranks.

“Throughout my Air Force career I have had the opportunity to work with amazing people from all corners of the earth with diverse backgrounds,” Pleus

said. “Every single Airman adds value to the team to get the mission done and it’s important we continue to build diverse and innovative teams in the Air Force.”

One of the schools he visited was the Fond Du Lac Tribal and Community College in Cloquet, Minnesota. This was a significant visit because

historically Indigenous Reservations have been difficult to access for Air Force recruiters.

Staff Sgt. Anastacia Rodriguez, an aerospace propulsion craftsman with the 6th Maintenance Squadron, and Indigenous Nations Equality Team spokeswoman for

the Department of the Air Force, accompanied Pleus during the visit to the school.

Rodriguez is from the Ramah Navajo Reservation in New Mexico and has worked on several Air Force Diversity and Inclusion initiatives to include the historical change

in women’s hair standards in 2020.

“Being able to influence positive changes in the Air Force so that it’s more inclusive for Indigenous people has been an incredibly rewarding experience,” said Rodriguez. “Anytime I have the opportunity to talk about my experiences in the Air Force with the local tribal community it is great, because I can possibly change the perspective of a future in the military.”

GO Inspire, with “GO” standing for general officer, is specifically designed for Air and Space Force generals to get out and engage youth



Lt. Gen. Scott Pleus, 7th Air Force commander, is interviewed by a student at the Fond Du Lac Tribal and Community College in Cloquet, Minnesota, March 9, 2022.

and youth influencers from underrepresented groups, or URGs, across the nation. The goal, according to Air Force Recruiting Service leadership, is to increase the diversity of its applicant pool in the rated and space communities, as well as the broader Air and Space Forces.



Staff Sgt. Anastasia Rodriguez, an aerospace propulsion craftsman, 6th Maintenance Squadron, talks with a student at the Fond Du Lac Tribal and Community College in Cloquet, Minnesota.